# GEOGRAPHIC NEWS BULLETINS

*Published Weekly by*

THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY

(The National Geographic Society is a scientific and educational Society, wholly altruistic, incorporated as a non-commercial institution for the increase of geographic knowledge and its popular diffusion. General Headquarters, Washington, D. C.)

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© *Hungarian Press-Photographic Exchange*

**CROATIAN HUCKLEBERRY FINNS HAVE LITTLE LORD FAUNTLEROY TRIMMINGS**

No matter what fire and mischief in their make-up, tradition prescribes that Croatian boys wear a brightly embroidered costume of snug jacket with fancy lapels, lace-trimmed ruffled shirt, and decorative buttons. The sheepskin cap, their year-round headgear, is shaped somewhat like the fez worn by Moslem countrymen to the south. Smilingly this Croatian quartet faces an unsettled future in Yugoslavia, where in recent troubled times a violent death a day has been traced to political unrest (Bulletin No. 2).

### HOW TEACHERS MAY OBTAIN THE BULLETINS

The Geographic News Bulletins are published weekly throughout the school year (thirty issues) and will be mailed to teachers in the United States and its possessions for one year upon receipt of 25 cents (stamps or money order); in Canada, 50 cents. Entered as second-class matter, Jan. 27, 1922, Post Office, Washington, D. C., under act of March 3, 1879. Acceptance for mailing at special rate of postage provided for in section 1103, Act of Oct. 3, 1917, authorized Feb. 9, 1922. Copyright, 1940, by National Geographic Society, Washington, D. C. International copyright secured. All rights reserved. Quedan reservados todos los derechos.

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**General Headquarters, Washington, D. C.**


## Pan American Flags Aloft for Pan American Day

THREE purple crosses and a flaming bronze sun, on a white field, mark the banner known as the Flag of the Americas, flown currently in honor of Pan American Week. The usual Pan American Day, April 14, has been expanded this year into a week-long observance of the Pan American Union's 50th anniversary.

The Flag of the Americas combines three crosses, chosen to symbolize Spain's contribution to the New World in the shape of Columbus and his three little ocean-hopping caravels, with the bronze sun of the Incas, to represent the Indian races.

In heraldic shorthand, the other flags of the 21 American republics record much about the history and geography of their respective countries. The volcanoes of Nicaragua, the llama of Peru, the condor of Ecuador, and the quetzal of Guatemala are among the geographic symbols elevated to a spot on national banners.

### Southern Sisters to U. S. Flag Also Starred and Striped

The flags of Pan American neighbors leave the United States no monopoly on stars and stripes, nor on red, white, and blue. Cuba (illustration, next page) and Panama are among those with banners of the same complexion as the Star-Spangled Banner. White and blue, minus the red, stripe the flags of Argentina, Uruguay, and others; white and red without the blue form the three vertical stripes of Peru.

Stripes of blue and white stretch across Central America between Mexico and Panama. The five intervening countries, which composed the Central American Federation from 1823 to 1837, all have flags reminiscent of their early Latin "League of Nations." Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua keep the same two horizontal blue stripes with a white one between. Honduras sets the stripes on their ear for blue, white, and blue verticals. Costa Rica splits the white stripe in two with a double-width red midrib. The five Federation members are recalled also by five volcanoes each on the flags of Nicaragua and Salvador, and five blue stars on that of Honduras.

Stars are nearly as popular as stripes. The United States still has the most, but Chile has the largest. The Chilean white star, alone on its small blue field, is traced to pennants brandished by Chilean Indians. Panama gets the maximum of variety with a minimum of stars—one blue and one red. The starriest Latin American banner is Brazil's. Within a yellow diamond on a green field, a blue circle represents the Brazilian heavens when the Southern Cross is overhead.

### Indian Symbols and Two-Faced Flags

The astronomical taste of more southerly nations appears to run to suns. Argentina's blue and white tricolor bears a notched golden sun, centered like a bull's-eye. Uruguay's sun is equipped with eyes, nose, and mouth, and adorned with 16 rays. The color of Argentina's three stripes and Uruguay's nine is attributed to the capture of blue and white cloth in a battle against the British.

A flag family of northern South America is the yellow-, blue-, and red-striped banner triplets of Colombia, Venezuela, and Ecuador. The three nations started independent life together under the colors of Simón Bolívar, "El Liberador," but separated in 1829-30. Venezuela's tricolor is differentiated by a semicircle of seven stars. Colombia's has a yellow stripe of double width. Ecuador's resembles Colombia's, but bears a coat of arms showing snow-capped Mount Chimborazo and a wing-flapping condor. The red and yellow in these flags hark back to the ensigns



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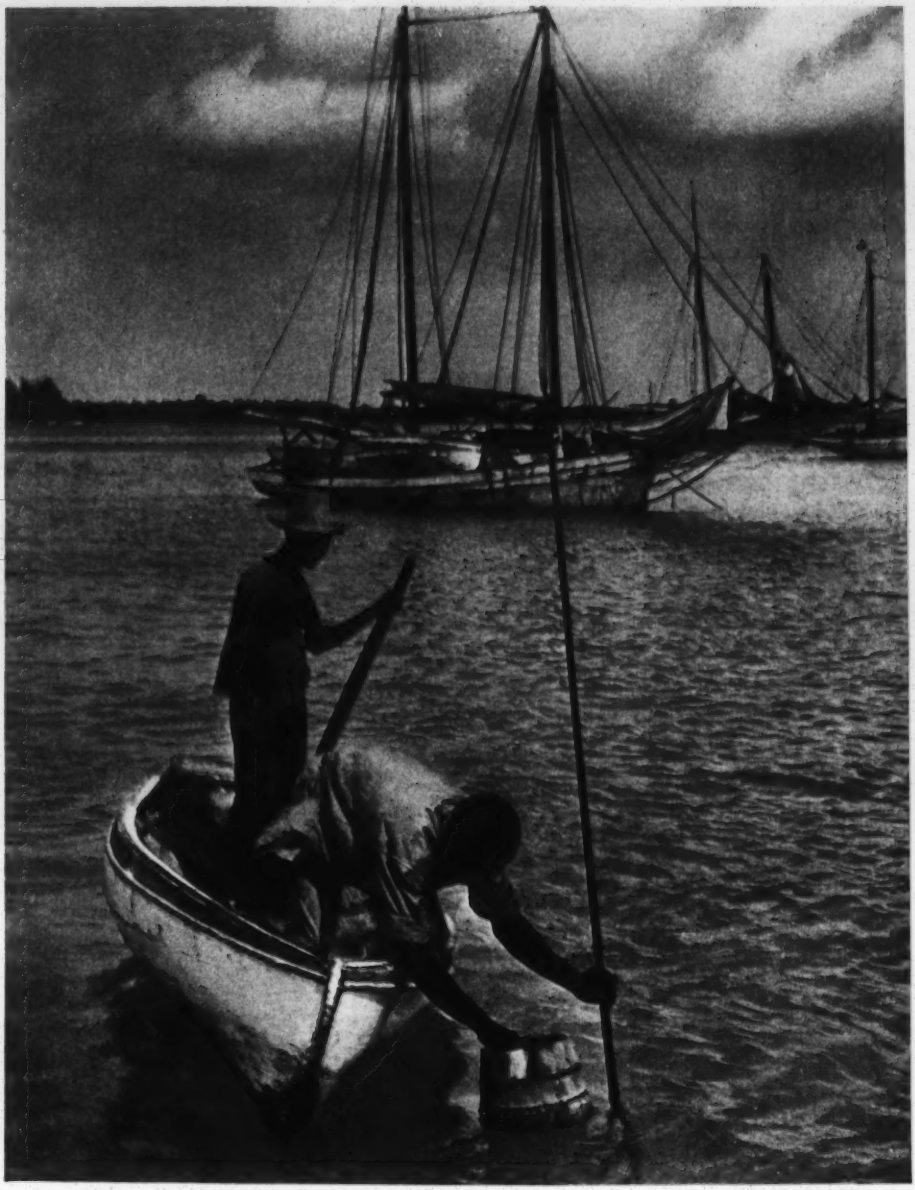

*Photograph by Stanley Toogood*

**BAHAMIAN FISHERMEN IN PAIRS HOOK SPONGES WITH POLE AND WATERGLASS**

**Floridians dive for sponges, but in the Bahamas the sponge beds lie in water shallow enough to be visible through the glass-bottomed bucket known as the waterglass. The bucket is pressed into the water so as to smooth the rippled surface of the water and to eliminate the reflected glare of the sun, so that the man with the hooked pole can see sponges on the bottom. The mother ship for these fishermen is anchored in the background, with other dinghies still unlaunched on its deck. When daylight fails, the dinghies return to the ship with their liver-colored and black catch. The work of the 3,000 sponge fishermen has been curtailed about 90 per cent because of a blight (Bulletin No. 3).**

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## Croatia: Yugoslavian Hinge of Balkan Politics

DOES Yugoslavia, like the Czecho-Slovakia of eighteen months ago, have a dissatisfied "Sudeten" minority? News reports quoting diplomats say so. Pointing to Croatia in the northwestern quarter of Yugoslavia, they speak of Croatian dissatisfaction with the national government, of German and Italian contributions to Croatian political funds.

Croatia became an autonomous state within Yugoslavia by an agreement reached last August. Election of new officials, however, was indefinitely postponed when Europe's war blazed up the following month. Now experts are wondering whether restless Croatia, lying where Europe's Adriatic coastline turns south into the Balkan Peninsula, will be a hinge on which the door to the Balkans will swing open to war.

### Reaches from Sardines to Plums and Potatoes

Croatia stretches eastward from old Dalmatian coastal towns which were summer resorts for wealthy Romans under the ancient Caesars, where sardine-fishing boats anchor in harbors that Venetian galleys visited, where peasants dance the "kola" in a ring immediately after Sunday mass. Behind the coast rise the steep limestone ranges of the Kapla and Dinara Mountains, where rivers drop from sight to flow underground, where the 28 famous Plitvice Lakes pour from terrace to terrace in splashing waterfalls.

In the forested parts of the highlands, the houses, furniture, and even forks and spoons are made of wood. Beyond the forests, Croatian shepherds watch over rolling pasture land. On the lowlands farther east spread the grain lands and potato patches, the vineyards which yield good grapes for the popular wine of the region, and the orchards from which come Croatia's apples and plums. Croatia, called the "Peasant Province," is four-fifths agricultural.

The heart of Croatia is the capital, Zagreb, a sophisticated industrial city some eighteen centuries old. With a full measure of museums, art galleries, and parks, it has banks by the score, a stock exchange, an opera house, a university, sawmills, chemical plants, soap and cosmetic factories, and other industries. It is the commercial center for mining interests, concerned with coal, iron, and aluminum.

### Croats Differentiated from Serbs by History and Geography

Autonomous Croatia consists of most of the former Hungarian crown land of Croatia and the coastal province of Dalmatia south to Dubrovnik. Some 26,000 square miles, or 26 per cent of the nation's area, and 4,423,000 people (28 per cent of the population) are included within the boundaries. About three-fourths of the people are Croats. Most of the others are Serbs. These are the two dominant races of Yugoslavia, which emerged from the World War under the name of the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes.

Croatians, in the northwestern quarter of Yugoslavia, are close neighbors of both the "Axis powers," Italy and Germany. Italy's island of Cherso and peninsula of Istria actually overlap the northern end of the Croatian coast. Vienna is little more than 150 miles by air north of Zagreb, in the streets of which German is frequently heard; Beograd, the national capital, is 225 miles distant.

The Croats are virtually Serbs who pushed across the Danube and took the consequences, both historic and geographic. Both the Croats and the Serbs speak



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of the erstwhile mother country, Spain. Bolivia likewise flies the formerly Spanish red and yellow, with a dash of green for the third stripe.

Haiti has a similar souvenir of a parental tricolor. Half red and half blue, the flag reputedly sprang from a French tricolor with the white torn out, to symbolize to revolting natives the triumph of the darker races.

Guatemala's most striking flag heritage is from the Indians—a quetzal, now the national bird, but formerly the mark of Indian royalty. The green and scarlet quetzal typifies freedom, for it does not ordinarily survive captivity. Mexico's flag also bears a symbol inherited from the Aztecs. The eagle with a serpent in its mouth beside a cactus plant was the mythical indication of the site on which the Aztecs founded Tenochtitlán, now Mexico's capital, the Distrito Federal.

The Dominican Republic and Paraguay both have red, white, and blue flags. A white cross divides that of the former into quadrants, alternately red and blue. Paraguay's tricolor is unique in the Americas in that it is not the same on both sides; a seal on one side shows a star, on the other side a lion. The only other recognized national flag with a two-sided pattern is that of Lithuania.

Note: The most recent of numerous articles about Pan American countries in the *National Geographic Magazine* are "Caracas, Cradle of the Liberator," April, 1940; "Puerto Rico: Watchdog of the Caribbean," December, 1939; "Buenos Aires: Queen of the River of Silver," November, 1939; "Rio Panorama," September, 1939; and "As Saõ Paulo Grows," May, 1939. Flags of the American republics are described in "Flags of the World," September, 1934.

**Bulletin No. 1, April 15, 1940.**

*Photograph by F. S. Lincoln*

**CUBA'S "LONE STAR" MIGRATED FROM TEXAS THROUGH NEW YORK CITY**

**The Cuban revolutionist Narciso López, in exile in New York, with the help of his friend Miguel Tolón, the poet, designed the Cuban flag in 1849. It was flown over the city of Cárdenas which López raided and captured in 1850. Blue and white stripes represent the island's five provinces at that time. The red triangle is credited to a symbol of the Masonic Order. The "Lone Star," borrowed from the Republic of Texas, gives the flag its Cuban name—"La Estrella Solitaria." It is shown above La Cabaña Fortress and the harbor of Habana (background).**

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## Bahamian Sponge Industry Hard Hit by Fungus Disease

SPONGE sickness is now confining the sponges of Florida's Gulf Coast to their beds, for a mysterious epidemic has reached them from the sponge beds of the Bahamas. The blight struck the Bahamian sponge industry in December, 1938, and shut it down temporarily. The sponges that survived this strange undersea sickness are being employed in a recovery program, which involves resettling hardy survivors, chiefly from Andros Island, to the deserted submarine homes of blighted sponge colonies. The sponge industry may take three or four years to recover from the unexplained attacks of disease, caused by a fungus-like filament growth.

The sponge industry of the Bahamas is second only to visitors as a source of income. It usually ranks third, after Florida and Cuba, in world production. Some 3,000 native fishermen depend for their livelihood on sponges in this West Indies colony of the British Empire.

### Sponge with Texture Like Sheep's Wool Is Most Valuable

Six commercial species of sponges are found in the clear blue waters of the Bahamian archipelago, growing on natural mud banks or on rocks in comparatively shallow water. Most sought after is the wool sponge, with its soft texture like sheep's wool (illustration, next page). The others, in order of their value, are velvet, grass, yellow, hardhead, and reef.

The brown- or yellow-colored sponge of commerce is really only a skeleton of a jet black or dark brown multicellular animal that grows on the sea bottom, anchored by strong "roots" to some hard object, such as a piece of rock or a coral reef. Sponge growth is slow. A wool sponge may require from 5 to 6 years to reach a marketable size (about 7 inches in diameter).

A large fleet of sailing boats is engaged annually during normal times in "harvesting" the sponge crop in the Bahamas. Each sponge boat carries on its broad decks a miniature "fleet" of small dinghies. When the sponge fishing ground is reached, the dinghies are launched. While one man sculls with a single oar at the stern, another peers through a glass-bottomed bucket to spot sponge growth (illustration, inside cover). When he sees something that looks like a hunk of tar or a piece of liver, he lowers a long hooked pole and brings it up.

### Soaked in Pools Called "Kraals"

To clean off the dark outer flesh, the sponges are exposed to the air for 24 to 48 hours, then soaked in stagnant little pools called "kraals" or "crawls," where their flesh decomposes, leaving only the skeleton. After being squeezed, they are dried in the open air. Most of this work is done along lonely shoreland, because the stench from decaying sponge flesh is one of the world's vilest odors.

When a sponge boat has enough sponges to fill it, and perhaps the dinghies on deck as well, it is time to sail for Nassau. This business trip is also a holiday. Entire families go along, from the old grandmother, with her clay pipe, to suckling babes, and sometimes a goat and pig, too. They cook their simple meals of grits and conch stew on deck, and lighten the journey with native songs and jokes.

When the broad-beamed boats are tied up in a bobbing row along the Nassau waterfront, the sponges are unloaded in sacks to be auctioned at the low-roofed Sponge Exchange. Unlike tobacco auctions, sponge sales are made without shout-



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the same language, but they write it differently—Croats using the Latin alphabet, Serbs using the Cyrillic. The Serbs inhabit the broad cosmopolitan valley of the Danube. The provincial Croats have made their home in isolated mountain valleys and separated plains cut off by the Danube's tributary rivers.

From the year 395, when the Emperor Theodosius bisected the Balkan Peninsula with a line dividing the Roman Empire between his two sons, the Croatians west of the line were fated to differ from their blood-brother Slavs to the East, the Serbs. While the latter adhere to the Serbian Orthodox faith, of the Greek persuasion, the Croats are for the most part Roman Catholic.

Serbs and Croats drew further apart when the latter fell under Hungary's rule in 1102, and the Serbs were overpowered by the Turks on the Plain of Kossovo in 1389. The famous Military Frontier helped separate them—the frontier which Hungary manned sometimes with Croatian soldiers to fight off Turkish forces which included Serbian conscripts. The honored Croatian occupation of breeding horses may date from this warlike period. A later division pitted detachments of these Southern Slavs against one another during the World War.

Note: See also "Kaleidoscopic Land of Europe's Youngest King," in the June, 1939, *National Geographic Magazine;* "Jugoslavia—Ten Years After," September, 1930; "Dalmatian Days," January, 1928; and "The Races of Europe," December, 1918.

**Bulletin No. 2, April 15, 1940.**

*Photograph by Melville Chater*

**WITH A LOAD OF FUEL ON HER HEAD, SHE SUPPORTS FOREST CONSERVATION**

**Along Yugoslavia's Croatian coast on the Adriatic, wood is used sparingly, for conservation is now enforced—too late—by necessity. Centuries ago, when the region was under Italian rule, the once-forested slopes of the coastal mountains were despoiled of timber to build Venetian galleys. Now the Croatians lack wood for fuel, and gather instead the wild furze, a thorny evergreen shrub, to serve as kindling. The stone so abundant in the mountains is used for houses and wells.**

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## Poles from Vanished Poland in America for 300 Years

THE University of Pittsburgh opened last month another in a series of seventeen classrooms dedicated to various nationalities. Designed by a Polish architect, decorated by Polish artists, and containing a manuscript opera by the Polish composer-pianist Paderewski, the latest of the nationality rooms is devoted to the Poles. Both Pittsburgh and Philadelphia have large settlements of Poles in their urban populations.

Although Poland again has been eclipsed in Europe, the spirit of the Poles lives on in the geography, history, and economy of the United States. Since colonial times Poles have played an important part in the building of America. They were among the settlers led by Captain John Smith at Jamestown, Virginia, in 1607, and staged what was doubtless one of America's first strikes until they were permitted to vote like the English for members of the House of Burgesses.

### Poles with George Washington, William Penn, and Daniel Boone

Peter Stuyvesant, recognizing Poles as valuable farming and fighting colonists, induced them to settle in New Holland (New York). As early as 1662 Dr. Alexander Kurcyusz founded in New York one of the first institutions of higher learning in America. John Sadowski set up a trading post in 1735 that was the forerunner of the busy industrial city of Sandusky, Ohio. His two sons were companions of Daniel Boone in many of his exploits.

Poles were generously sprinkled in the thirteen colonies at the time of the Revolution, contributing to the ultimate freedom of America. They had been in Delaware as early as 1650, and William Penn numbered them among his loyal settlers. Most famous among the early Polish-Americans was Kosciuszko, who joined the army of the Revolution in 1776, rose to the rank of Colonel of Artillery and became General Washington's adjutant (illustration, next page). Congress awarded him American citizenship, a pension with landed estates, and the rank of Brigadier General. Pulaski was another noted Pole who aided the youthful United States.

Polish migration on a large scale did not begin until about 1832, after a political uprising in Poland. In that year, in 1848, and in the 1880's, economic and political disturbances in the Old World gave impetus to normal immigration. Today there are about 4,000,000 Poles widely distributed over the United States. About 80 per cent of them are naturalized citizens.

### One Out of Ten Is a Farmer

A recent census shows that Chicago has the largest Polish population of any city in the United States, with about half a million; it is the second largest "Polish" city in the world. Detroit, next in rank, has approximately 300,000, and New York City has about 200,000. These figures include native-born Poles and inhabitants of Polish descent.

Most of the immigrants from Poland were landless peasants, laborers, and small tradesmen in the old country. While Polish farmers are to be found in States from coast to coast, only one out of ten Poles in the United States tills the soil. The largest number of Poles are employed in industry, particularly in sugar refineries, cotton mills, furniture factories, mines, steel mills, automobile plants, and in the lumber industry of the Northwest. They are largely concentrated in the New



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ing. The seller selects a broker, who receives written bids from buyers. Deals are closed for cash.

Then the sponges are transported in rumbling, two-wheeled carts to the packing houses, where they are stored, cleaned, clipped, graded, and finally compressed into burlap-wrapped bales for shipment to New York or London. Sponges that show traces of blight or other defects are sold for fertilizer. Clippings from good sponges are used as insulation in refrigerators and sound- or moisture-proof walls.

The bath is only one of the minor applications for sponges. They are vastly more valuable in the arts, in medicine, and in such industries as refrigeration, soundproofing, tailoring (for padding coats), mattress-making, painting pottery (for applying the glaze), and car washing.

Scientifically, the sponge is in a sort of blind alley of evolution. It is the lowest form of multicellular animal, but has no multicellular relatives.

Note: Additional material about sponges in the Bahamas and Florida will be found in "Denizens of Our Warm Atlantic Waters," *National Geographic Magazine*, February, 1937; "Bahama Holiday," February, 1936; and "Florida—The Fountain of Youth," January, 1930.

**Bulletin No. 3, April 15, 1940.**

*Photograph by Stanley Toogood*

**ONE GIRL OR 16 GALS. IS A CHAMPION SPONGE'S CAPACITY**

**An unusually large specimen, it easily holds the little girl within its ample circumference, which measures six feet. This thirsty skeleton of the multicellular sponge soaked up 16 gallons of water before it was saturated. Its texture is soft and resilient, of the "wool" variety. A more normal-sized sponge of the same type is held by the child.**

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## Expedition Finds Five Huge Carved Heads in Mexico

FIVE colossal heads carved in human form from basalt, each weighing 20 tons or more (illustration, next page), have been discovered in the Tehuantepec Isthmus region of Mexico by a joint archeological expedition of the National Geographic Society and the Smithsonian Institution.

The expedition is headed by Matthew W. Stirling, Chief of the Bureau of American Ethnology of the Smithsonian Institution. So far, the expedition's excavations have failed to uncover any evidence to indicate the age of the gigantic carvings or what their significance was.

### One Reported, Five Heads Found

The heads were found near the small village of La Venta in the western edge of the State of Tabasco, about 20 miles from the coast of the Gulf of Mexico. They were almost completely covered by soil.

The newly found sculptures are similar to the single colossal head unearthed in 1939 by the same expedition at Tres Zapotes, in the State of Vera Cruz, a hundred and twenty miles to the west. This was the first of the mysterious big heads to be fully excavated and photographed.

The existence of one partially buried head at La Venta had been reported in 1925 by a Tulane University Expedition led by Frans Blom. It was not suspected, however, that five of the huge carvings existed until Mr. Stirling visited the site last month.

### Mystery of Massive Stone Transported through Swamps

The five colossal heads of La Venta vary in height from 6 feet to 8 feet 5 inches, and in circumference from 13 feet 7½ inches to 21 feet 7 inches. It is estimated that the weight of the largest may exceed 25 tons.

The archeologists have as yet found no source of basalt nearer than 100 miles from the place at which the sculptures were unearthed. Two of the unsolved problems in connection with the heads are, where they were made, and how the huge, heavy pieces of stone were transported through the jungle to their present sites in the swampy coastal plain.

The huge heads have no necks; the base of each lies just below the chin and rests on a sort of foundation of broken stones.

One head is shaped in the form of an altar. The features on the other four heads are boldly sculptured with broad noses, thick lips, and prominent eyes. The ears, however, are conventionalized, and are mere tracings in low relief.

### Hard Stone Carved without Metal Tools

The La Venta site has some unusual geographic features. It is a relatively high sandy island surrounded by the wooded swamps of the coastal plain. It is covered with the usual jungle growth. On this raised land a family or clan of Indians, under the leadership of 80-year-old Sebastian Torres, have made a clearing, and there they operate their *milpas,* or farm plots. The stone heads are in the jungle near the clearing.

Near the huge head found at Tres Zapotes in 1939, the expedition also unearthed carved monuments suggesting Maya influences; but the carving of the heads differs markedly in style from known Maya sculpture.



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England States, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Illinois, Indiana, Missouri, Pennsylvania, Texas, Iowa, and Nebraska.

But agriculture and industry have not, by any means, absorbed all the Poles. Since the time of Kosciuszko's and Pulaski's military eminence, and the Polish Jew Haym Salomon's generous contribution of funds which was a factor in the success of the American Revolution, other Poles have also risen to prominence in the professional and business life of the United States.

Their names glitter on marquees of American concert halls, theaters, and opera houses. Paderewski, whose piano has thrilled millions, is a Pole. Pola Negri, Ganna Walska, and Gilda Gray are among the Polish celebrities of screen and stage. Leopold Stokowski, Artur Rubinstein, Artur Rodzinski, and Josef Hofmann are but a few of the Poles who have entertained American music lovers. Besides these, Polish artists, sculptors, financiers, professors, preachers and priests, and business men have had a part in the make-up of modern America. In state and national governments Polish men and women are holding offices of responsibility.

**Bulletin No. 4, April 15, 1940.**

*Photograph by B. Anthony Stewart*

**WASHINGTON'S POLISH AIDE STANDS HIGH IN WASHINGTON'S ESTEEM TODAY**

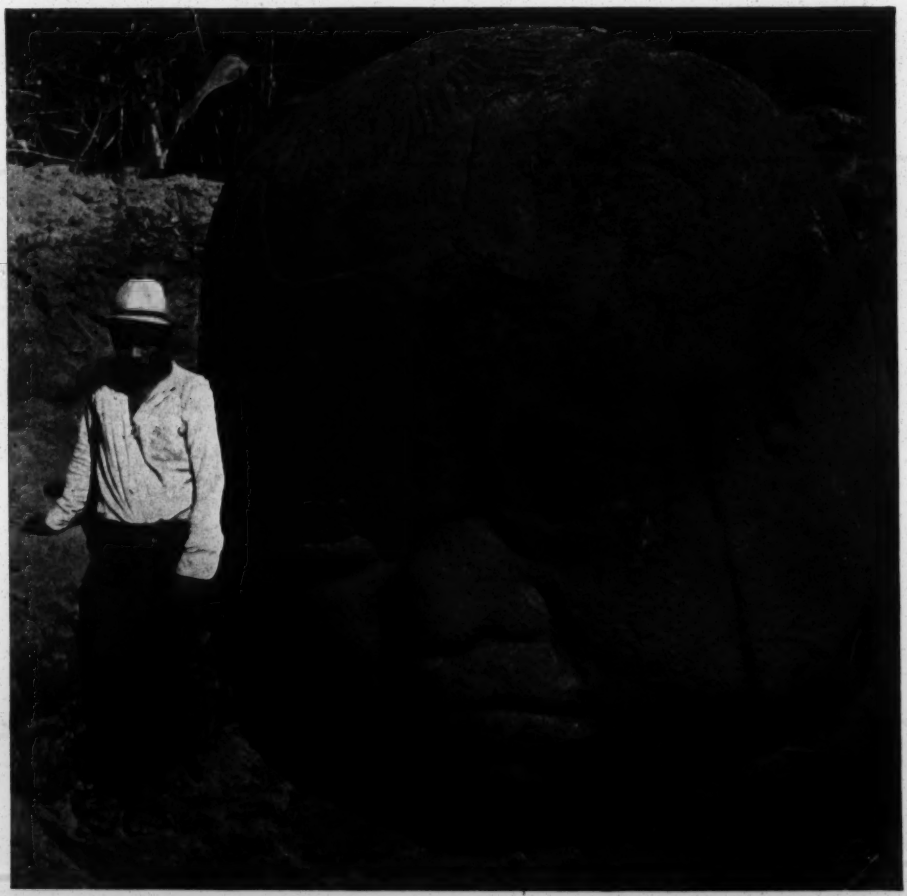
**The four monuments at the four corners of Lafayette Square opposite the White House in Washington, D. C., commemorate foreign Revolutionary heroes—two French, one German, and one Polish. The Polish Kosciuszko, on the northeast corner, is represented wearing the uniform of the Continental army and holding the plans of Saratoga's fortifications. Decorations around the pedestal refer to his strategic share in the victory of Saratoga. His efforts to liberate the United States and his native Poland as well are alluded to in the inscription from a line by Thomas Campbell, "And Freedom shrieked as Kosciuszko fell." A town in Mississippi is named for the general.**

So far as the archeologists have found, there is no evidence that metal implements were used either on the heads or on the Mayalike carvings. It is believed that all of the work was done with stone tools, or possibly by wearing away parts of the surfaces with sand as an abrasive.

Note: An introduction to the "colossal-head-hunt" of the National Geographic Society-Smithsonian Institution Expedition is contained in "Discovering the New World's Oldest Dated Work of Man," *National Geographic Magazine*, August, 1939.

See also in the GEOGRAPHIC NEWS BULLETINS: "Earliest Recorded Date Known in New World Encourages Explorers," January 15, 1940; and "Vera Cruz Find Extends Limit of Maya Culture," March 6, 1939.

**Bulletin No. 5, April 15, 1940.**



*Photograph by Richard H. Stewart*

**A GIANT STONE HEAD DWARFS A MEXICAN INTO A LILLIPUTIAN**

**This 20-ton head carved of basalt is one of the five found near the village of La Venta in the western part of Mexico's State of Tabasco not far from the State of Vera Cruz. The unexplained stone-head quintuplets were uncovered last month by a joint archeological expedition of the National Geographic Society and the Smithsonian Institution. This, one of the larger of the basalt colossi, is 8 feet 1 inch high from chin to crown, and 20 feet 10 inches around. A full-length figure carved on the same scale would be more than 60 feet tall. The bulging eyes and thick lips are modeled in bold relief; yet the ears are barely implied by a carved curlicue. An unusual feature is the pair of hornlike processes curving upward from the brow. The sunburst of lines on the crown of the head probably indicates hair.**

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